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THE FUTURE OF CUBA.

BY THE HON. ROBERT P. PORTER.

THE fate of Cuba and the Cubans no longer rests in the hands of a small cabal of mediæval and selfish statesmen at Madrid, intent only upon enriching the mother country, but with the people of the United States, who are to-day actively and impartially discussing the future of the island. The question is not how much the United States can make out of Cuba, but how best to make a prosperous, peaceful and useful neighbor of an island within a hundred miles from the shores of the Great Republic. The people of Cuba must disabuse themselves of the idea that the future of their native land is in the hands of some one man or any set of men. On the contrary, it has been committed to the care of a liberty-loving people, as jealous of popular rights as those Cuban patriots, who, like Marti and Gomez and Maceo and Garcia and Quesada, risked their lives to make their country free. That the people of the United States will deal justly and fairly with the people of Cuba, does not admit of doubt, and the closer the people of the two countries come together on a platform of mutual trust and confidence, the sooner a stable government will be established.

It may be well for our Cuban friends to remember, that a considerable number of the seventy-five millions of the American Republic have themselves exchanged for the Stars and Stripes flags that mean as much to them as the Cuban flag to the most patriotic Cuban, and around which cluster as tender memories as those which the flag of the Cuban Republic suggests. The great newspaper press of the United States is discussing all sides of the Cuban question as intelligently and vigorously, and as fairly and honestly towards Cuban interests, as it does our own important domestic questions, and no Cuban need for a moment fear that the conclusions reached will be other than for the best interests of

all concerned. If, at the conclusion of military occupation, Cuba is made an independent republic, it will be because the people of Cuba and the people of the United States, acting jointly, so decide. If, on the contrary, the future of Cuba shall lie in the still greater independence of American Statehood, it will be by the mutual consent of the people of the two countries. There are no other possibilities in the final solution of the political future of Cuba.

The more stable the government of Cuba, the more certain will be its industrial development. The closer and stronger the ties which bind Cuba to the United States, the greater will be the prosperity and the more rapid the reconstruction of the island. To the outside world Cuba has become part of the United States. To call the present situation Military Protectorate or Military Occupancy will not alter the fact that the strength of Cuba to-day is its close alliance with the United States. Commercially and industrially the two countries fit perfectly together. The products of Cuba can all find a market in the United States, while the needs of Cuba can all be supplied by its continental neighbor. The Cubans have had a taste of the prosperity which followed reciprocal commercial relations with the United States. The golden possibilities of absolutely free intercourse between Cuba and the United States must be apparent to the more intelligent Cubans. That sentiment for a flag and a country is natural and laudable cannot be denied; but in the final and mutual coming together of Cuba and the United States, the single star becomes not less bright by reason of association or companionship with the other stars, together making a harmonious whole, and representing all that is best and most hopeful for mankind.

A good deal of honest and intelligent work has already been done by the United States for Cuba. A new tariff has been framed and put in operation by the War Department, aided by experienced officials from the Treasury Department. The Post Office Department has inaugurated an improved mailservice. The telegraph lines are rapidly being put in order. The United States sanitary authorities are laying their plans for a vigorous campaign against epidemic disease this summer. The Governors of cities are as rapidly as possible cleaning up the streets and preparing plans for modern sewerage and drainage. Under the direction of General Brooke and the immediate supervision of General Chaffee, a complete system for policing the rural districts of the island with Cuban

police is in progress of organization. For this purpose the Cuban Army will be utilized, as far as possible. The United States has abolished many onerous taxes, stopped the draining away to Spain of the resources and revenues of Cuba, and has rigorously applied all available methods and instruments to the building up of the island and to improving the condition of the people. It has endeavored to establish the principle that the island should be governed in the interest of Cuba, by Cubans, for the people of Cuba.

There still remains a great deal of work to do. The thin end of the wedge of the stronger civilization has been inserted, but time and patience and strength will all be required to drive it home. The programme mapped out is a long and expensive one, and more money than is at present in sight will be required to carry it through. The building of public roads, the establishment of public schools, and the inauguration of sanitary work are three branches of the civil government that must be pressed forward with all possible vigor, immediately after the scheme for policing Cuba has been completed. The importance of teaching English in all Cuban public schools must not be overlooked, because the Cuban people will never understand the people of the United States until they appreciate our institutions. A complete reform of the judiciary must follow. The laws relating to ownership and transfer of property must be revived, safeguards added to the laws relating to mortgages, and some of the old customs repealed. Savings banks must also be established, for no people can become permanently prosperous where thrift is unknown, and where there are no opportunities for saving the surplus earnings of the population. The Government of the United States, acting in conjunction with the Cuban people, has a serious and important work to perform.

The Government, however, cannot be depended upon to do it all. The people must get to work again themselves, and help in every possible way in the task of reconstruction. To be successful, this work should be begun in the right way from the foundation up, or it will become top heavy, and the second condition of the Cuban people will be worse and more helpless than the first. The population must be got to work again in its strong industries, and the fields must be made to yield in abundance, before enterprises, of which so much is heard, and the success of which depends so largely upon the prosperity of the people, can be made to

pay. Sugar, tobacco, mining, agriculture, timber, fruit production and miscellaneous industries are the true sources of Cuban wealth. The industrial and commercial future of Cuba depends upon how thoroughly and how persistently these industries are worked, and not upon distribution of foreign capital in enterprises which, in the end, must be fed by the wealth coming from the soil. For judicious investment there is opportunity in Cuba, but the scramble for franchises of various kinds has inflated values, and, unless conservatism prevails, there is danger of repeating in Cuba some of the follies with which the New South is strewn. The basic industries must be vigorously worked in Cuba. Unless this is done, the writer sees only trouble and disaster ahead. To do this successfully, the labor market must be enlarged by immigration, and to attract immigration the condition of the laborer must be improved. Where is the labor to build up the wasted fields of Cuba to come from? It is a hard question to answer. Efforts are being made by those who best know the needs of Cuba to entice labor thither. They should be encouraged, for, unless more laborers can be found, the return of prosperity will be slow and prolonged over many years.

The opportunities for American labor in Cuba are circumscribed. If the climate were more temperate and the dangers of disease less, there would undoubtedly be an influx of labor from the United States. Just as the restless and hopeful population of the Eastern States has migrated westward, and to some extent southward, in our own country, so it would find its way to Cuba if conditions allowed of extensive settlement and homemaking. In the opinion of the writer they do not, and hence the industrial rehabilitation of Cuba must rely upon other sources than the United States for its supply of labor. Of course, Americans will settle in Cuba and do business in Cuba, and possibly make their fortunes in Cuba. Not in the way they have settled up our own vast area by purchasing farms and building homes, but in projecting and pushing enterprises. In Cuba, sugar production has become two distinct industries, one the sugar factory and the other the *colona*, or cane-raising farm, or estate. The central, or sugar factory, often owns large areas of land, but does not depend wholly upon its own acres for cane. Some factories depend more largely upon the *colona*, or small farms which supply the cane. This cane the central brings to the sugar house by the aid

of narrow gauge railways, extending over the estate and into adjoining farms. There are opportunities for farm laborers who can withstand a tropical climate, to settle on small areas of land and raise sugar cane. Every possible encouragement will be given to this class of immigrants. Mr. J. White Todd, who lived twenty years in Cuba, has informed the writer that in his opinion industrious immigrants from Southern Italy and Southern Spain will find ample opportunities in Cuba to establish homes and make a profitable living, raising cane for the sugar factories. If they are willing to work, the owners of the centrals or factories will gladly secure them the land and tide them over the first crop. This class of laborers, and the Canary Islanders, are the only ones likely to take up and work small sugar farms in Cuba. The experience heretofore with the negroes has not been satisfactory, though under a better system of government it may be different. The success of the sugar factory depends so largely upon the available sugar cane of the district, that the central is always glad to aid a laborer likely to become a thrifty *colono*. In coffee and tobacco there are possibilities on a small scale, and also in fruit-growing when roads and highways have been sufficiently improved to get the product to market. Herein lies the only feasible opportunity for small American capitalists who desire to live in a tropical climate. It is true that only a small portion of this wonderful island is under cultivation. In time it might all be utilized, the larger part, of course, in sugar. When Continental Europe tires of paying a bounty for producing sugar, Cuba must take its place as the first sugar-producing country of the world, a place it never would have lost had it not been for misgovernment, war and failure to promptly adopt modern methods when beet sugar first became a factor in the world's supply.

The particular lines on which the enterprise, ingenuity and capital of the United States can be utilized in Cuba, will undoubtedly be in the establishment of public and semi-public works and in the improvement of methods of production. Here are some of the enterprises likely to be taken up by American and English capitalists:

- a. Sanitary Improvements and Water Works.
- b. Street Railways and Light Railway Transportation in Suburban Districts.
- c. Gas Works and Electric Lighting.

- d.* Unifying and Extension of Railway System.
- e.* Establishment of Better Facilities for Coastwise Transportation.
- f.* Navigation between Cuba and the United States.
- g.* Wharfage, Lighterage and Public Warehouses.
- h.* Telegraphic and Telephone Services.
- i.* Public Roads and Highways.
- j.* Savings Banks and Financial Institutions to aid commerce and industry.
- k.* Places of Amusement, Tropical Gardens and Hotels.

The directing hand of American enterprise will be soon felt in these branches of modern endeavor, and the effect must be an improved condition of life and of morals. To make these enterprises profitable, however, the real productive forces of the island must first be revived, and, if possible, increased. The strength of the building of our own nation lies in the fact that our productive powers were developed first, and the modern improvements and conveniences have been gradually coming along in the proper order. Nothing could be more unfortunate for Cuba than a wild and speculative plunge in the above direction, before the real strength of the island is again concentrated and put in vigorous working order. In the first place, it would temporarily take away the working forces from the land. In the second place, these enterprises cannot be made self-sustaining until normal productive conditions are restored. The effect, therefore, would be loss of capital and disappointment. The objective and immediate point for good work should be the land. If the new industrial impetus shall be in this direction, the Cuban problem will be simplified and the future of Cuba full of promise.

ROBERT P. PORTER.